

Remarks

Reconsideration of the subject application as amended herein is respectfully requested. The claims stand rejected as being anticipated by or obvious in view of several references, as well as on formal grounds. In response, the claims have been amended. The significance and reasons for these amendments should become apparent in light of the discussion below. Claims 5, 15 and 30, are amended to recite 'surfaces are non-horizontal to promote self cleaning and to draining' to overcome the Examiner's objection at paragraph 3 of the Office Action.

Support for this language is found at page 1, paragraphs 10 and 11. Amended independent claim 1 is directed to a conveyor of a type that supports a conveyor belt and recites features that are unique to the construction of the conveyor. The claim has been amended in two ways: firstly to clarify that the belt of the conveyor is supported along its length; and secondly to recite that the platform support arrangement is formed by bending to provide integral leg structures that extend transversely underneath the belt platform. A corresponding amendment has been made to independent method claim 30. It should be noted that in the corresponding European application, the Examiner has indicated that a claim of similar form would be allowable.

The Examiner has objected claim 1 as being anticipated by Smith and Rinio. The applicant notes that nowhere does Smith describe a platform suitable for supporting a conveyor belt. There is no mention anywhere of a belt. Column

1, lines 10 to 18 of Smith describes the platform as being of a type that would be elevated by a truck. This type of platform is what would be known today as a pallet for lifting by a fork-lift truck or the like and has nothing to do with the present invention.

Moreover, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the platform support arrangement is formed by bending to provide integral leg structures that extend transversely underneath the platform. The leg structures in Smith do not extend transversely underneath the platform, and there is certainly no suggestion that they might do so. Accordingly, claim 1 is not anticipated by Smith.

The Examiner also rejected independent claim 15 as being anticipated by Smith. Claim 15 recites some features of the conveyor that are unique. That is to say avoiding horizontal surfaces on which food spills etc can accumulate, and avoiding use of welds or threaded fasteners, into which bacteria can penetrate. For the same reasons discussed above in relation to claim 1, Smith does not disclose or suggest a conveyor that comprises a belt platform. However, Smith also fails to disclose or suggest a conveyor in which none of the exposed surfaces are horizontal in use. The hygiene problem addressed by the present invention is not discussed in Smith at all. Accordingly, claim 15 is novel over Smith.

Independent claim 28 is novel over Smith, for the same reasons discussed above in relation to claim 1.

Rinio discloses a scraper-chain conveyor. It appears that the described

conveyor does not disclose a belt. Nevertheless, the Examiner has identified a belt platform by reference numeral 15. This item is described in column 5, line 64 as being a shank, and is shown in the Figures (see Figure 5) as extending horizontally between opposing side walls (2, 2a). The Examiner has pointed to a passage in column 3, lines 1 to 8 as disclosing 'substantially the whole of said belt platform and said support arrangement is a unitary component from a single sheet of metal'. However, the cited passage actually states that it is each of the side walls that may be formed from a single piece of material. A review of the description of Rinio at column 5, lines 51 to 75, clearly indicates that the shank 15 is welded to the side walls (2,2a). Accordingly, Rinio does not disclose or suggest substantially the whole of a belt platform formed as a unitary component from a single sheet of metal (as the Examiner has asserted). Moreover, the conveyor of Rinio does not disclose or suggest that the platform support arrangement is formed by bending from a single sheet of metal to provide integral leg structures that extend transversely underneath the belt platform. Accordingly, claim 1 is novel over Rinio.

Similarly, Rinio does not disclose the feature recited in independent claim 15 that the platform support arrangement is a unitary component formed from a single sheet of metal. The Rinio support requires at least three components (two side walls (2, 2a) and a shank (15)), that are welded together. Moreover, claim 15 recites that the conveyor is 'configured to be constructed substantially without use of welding or threaded fasteners'. The Rinio conveyor requires (at least) the

